

DISCLAIMER

This publication contains the opinions, ideas, and stories of its author. It is intended to provide helpful and informative materials on the subjects addressed in the publication. It is sold with the understanding that the author is not rendering medical or legal services or advice in this book. The reader should consult his or her own medical or legal professionals before adopting anything from this book or drawing inferences from it. This book is not intended to serve as a basis for any medical or legal advice, recommendation or decision of a specific protocol or strategy. The author specifically disclaims all responsibility for any liability, loss or risk personal or otherwise which is incurred as a consequence directly or indirectly of the use and application of any contents of this book.

Introduction

If there's a book you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, you must write it.

~ Toni Morrison

Like bramble in a finely cultivated garden, addiction took root in my family. I had no idea or experience of how to be, live or exist with addiction, let alone the heroin, meth and opiate pill-popping addict that had become my younger sister. You see, I'm a lawyer, wife, daughter, soul-sister-girlfriend kind of person that lived a predominantly hockey mom life. My younger sister and I were brought up Catholic in the beautiful purity and wild rawness of Alaska. My limited exposure to addiction consisted of my work as a personal injury lawyer, when I represented people that self-medicated with alcohol or opiates. Those infrequent client experiences made an impression and prompted me to volunteer on the Lawyer's Assistance Committee of the Alaska Bar Association, where I was introduced to the misuse of substances by legal professionals as a hack to manage the pressures of a harrowing high stakes law career.

The limited contact I had with drugs and addiction poised me to objectify drug dependency with well-meaning attempts to manage and control my sister with structure, as I would a client in my law office or when I parented toddlers. I created a schedule and blocked time to focus on what appeared to be the core of the chaotic crisis that swirled about me. I developed a research strategy and created an outline of strong and weak points in an attempt to contain the conundrum of this vicious vex that infiltrated our family. I thoughtfully analyzed areas to neutralize and set out bullet points of who was at fault, why and what factors contributed to addiction. The objective was to understand this new and unfamiliar adversary and the aim was to enervate the demon that possessed my sister.

I researched causes of addiction and concluded that none of the usual suspects fit. Our parents weren't alcoholics or addicts. We didn't have a drunken uncle in the family and our childhood was stable, supportive and non-traumatic. We were raised to be active in school events, involved in the community and attend church weekly. Like our parents, my sister and I had solid educations with advanced degrees. People with stable families do not normally succumb to addiction, or so I thought.

Not finding a familiar origin, I switched gears and approached addiction as a medical condition, similar to when my dad had a heart attack and underwent quintuple bypass surgery, or when the doctors diagnosed my father in law with a lung condition or when my uncle and aunties received cancer diagnoses and valiantly stepped into those battles. I figured that equivalent medical protocols for these medical conditions that occurred in our family

Sister Siren, A Nonfiction About Addiction - Field Guide On How To Love An Addict.

Introduction

Page 1 of 4

similarly applied to addiction. I searched for books written by experts in the field of addiction with the mindset that I couldn't be the only human on this planet to encounter addiction. Someone must have a proven approach or protocol to this disorder. There has got to be somebody with initials after their name that has addressed addiction and developed a "best practices guide" to navigate the waters that storm fronted our family. There at least had to be a cliff note version to study up on addiction or some sort of "Addiction for Dummies" with a do it yourself matrix I could implement.

I bought several books, a few with helpful resources about the brain on drugs, but most of the reading material on addiction were sad memoirs of heartbroken family members and washed up, dried out rock stars. I felt that time was not on my side and I simply did not have the emotional bandwidth to absorb these personal accounts. I needed something different and I needed it immediately. I turned to the internet with the thought that in the information age we lived in, a computer search would supply readily accessible answers at my fingertips to a trove of resources. I thought all I had to do was plug in my sister's drug of choice, enter our zip code and my internet search of options and resources would appear on the computer screen. I figured there'd be links to community resource centers with calendars of speakers, events and podcasts on addiction that were educational and informative. What did appear were websites for rehab facilities, twelve step programs and support groups. I listened to TED talks, watched videos and accessed as much information about addiction that my eyes, ears and brain could absorb. I foraged for and through countless hardcovers and paperbacks, pamphlets, leaflets, went to solemn community events and talked to people with and without initials after their names with hopes of locating a source of information, or at least a template to overlay onto this toxic paradox that invaded our family.

I spoke with friends and family that could listen; counselors, professional colleagues and anyone that would listen, cared about, loved someone or had a brush with addiction. I met with a medium, mystic, prayed on my knees to patron saints of lost causes and addiction in churches all over the state of Alaska and throughout the lower forty-eight. I reached out to any human on planet Earth who would listen, and reached into the spiritual realm in an effort to clear the air of the tempest cloud of drug dependency that reigned over my sister.

I was unable to find a satisfactory book, solid expert, coach or guru that could point me in a direction to implement an effective offensive on this goon that squatted and wreaked havoc within our family. I was mystified that in the efficient and streamlined century, country and world that we lived in, a solution to addiction had not been found. There was not a proven protocol, perfected playbook, magical rubric, streamlined study guide or cheat sheet checklist to follow and overlay addiction.

So, what's a girl to do that loves an addict and can't find a powerful fount source to eradicate an evil anathema like addiction? All that she can do within her being, and that is what this book is about. These writings recap experiences with my younger sister while in the grips of active addiction. It is a personal perspective of her chronic use of substances that insidiously evolved into severe substance abuse disorder and recounts our hodge-podge resilience over the disease of addiction. This book shares our families' introduction to the disease of addiction, our novice and professional interventions and the rocky road to treatment, rehabilitation and recovery with stories of our family's perseverance and survival. This book shares powerful experiences that brought me to the gates of Hell to retrieve my sister and to a grateful bended knee for the evolved supernova kin connection with her that I prayed for. I chronicle traumatic trips and despairing depths that adjusted us from life's normal course to weather and withstand the cold, harsh storm fronts that pummeled our presence, but not our potential.

This book is roller-coaster real and chronicles our family's saga through the years my sister was in active addiction, with portrayals of mishmash systems we devised. I share progressive plays we made against the antagonist that, at times, overwhelmed us. We colored outside the box during matriculation of the independent study program offered by addiction's school of hard knocks. In the back of this book is a glossary of bold words with defined terms and share resources of concepts and contemplations that were of support in this journey.

Our family's experience of a drug-directed detour from life's happy highway to passengers on a rickety railway car on Mr. Toads Wild Ride changed how we showed up to play with a faithful energy that transformed our game. Fasten your seatbelt and hold on as the stories go to the deep underbelly of family truths and climb light-headedly high to explore whatever woo-woo would work. Ultimately, and seemingly super naturally, faith, hope and an exosphere level of love was restored.

This book contains real life stories of what happened to me and everything between me – the mountains, molehills, husbands, parents, children, fur-babies, aunties, uncles, cousins, soul sisters, “family”, what I call friends that are family, community - and my sister. To be clear, this book and the words herein will not save you or your loved one, and I am not an expert on the toxic plague of addiction. I'm just a middle aged woman that walked this road and knows what fit for me, and I offer it to you, the reader with the hope, love and faith that pulled me and my family through the chaotic, crazy time warp that addiction is. As is said, take what helps and leave behind what doesn't fit. I am grateful to have the love and blessing of my family, including my sister, to tell these stories with the intention to open

Sister Siren, A Nonfiction About Addiction - Field Guide On How To Love An Addict.

Introduction

Page 3 of 4

hearts, minds, and souls. For it is only with open hearts, minds, and souls that we can love an addict.